

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2ND DISTRICT

Jim McCune

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HELPING VETERANS

As a member of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs, I am always looking for ways to assist our military men and women. I sponsored two bills that would have helped veterans with their property tax and real estate tax. Neither was allowed to move forward.

- **House Bill 1720** would have given property tax exemptions to veterans who are disabled in the line of duty and seniors.

- **House Bill 1308** would have provided a real estate tax exemption to members of the armed forces who must sell their homes because of relocation orders.

While these bills were ignored, I was able to put forth **Senate Bill 5256** out of the House Rules Committee for a vote. This measure will provide property tax relief for many disabled veterans who could not previously meet the income requirements. If you need additional

details, please call your county assessor.



Please join me at a Town Hall Meeting

► **Friday, April 25**
7 - 8 p.m.

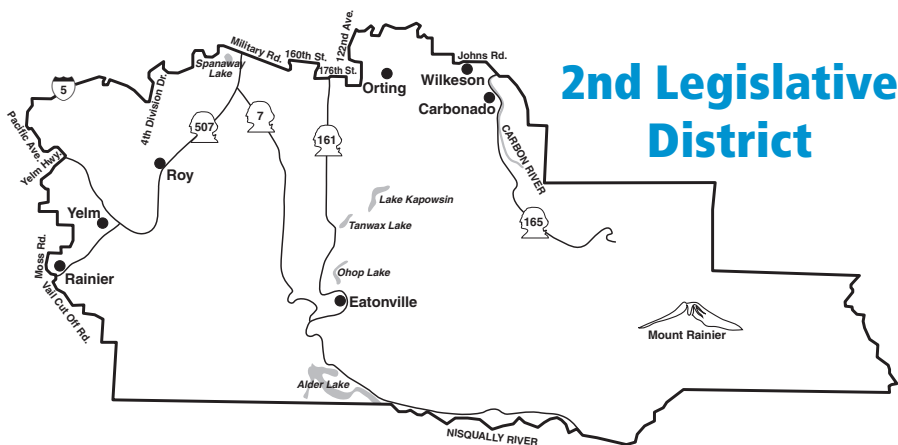
Graham Fire and Rescue
23014 - 70th Avenue East
Graham

► **Saturday, April 26**
9 - 10 a.m.

Eatonville Library
205 Center Street West
Eatonville

11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Orting Multi-Purpose Building
202 WA Avenue South
Orting



State Representative
Jim McCune

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**2008 Legislative
Session Review**
TOWN HALL MEETINGS
details included

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2ND DISTRICT

Jim McCune



2008 Legislative Session Review

Dear Friends,

The 2008 legislative session ended on March 13 after 60 days. State lawmakers are now back in their districts spending more time with their families, meeting with constituents and looking forward to the summer.

This year we saw some successes in Olympia – including strengthening laws pertaining to sex offenders, identity theft, gangs, and those who elude law enforcement. We also moved forward with providing our students with a new Pierce County Skills Center and more career and technical education options. Important projects in the 2nd District were also funded in the capital and transportation budgets.

Unfortunately, there were more “misses” than “hits” this year. The majority party and governor added \$291 million in new state spending at a time when nonpartisan Senate staff is projecting a \$2.4 billion budget shortfall next year. In not being able to control spending, they cannot control taxes. This means there was no meaningful property tax relief – especially for seniors and veterans on fixed incomes.

I discuss these issues and others in more depth in this newsletter. I hope you are able to take the time to read through it.

I am honored to serve you in the Washington State House of Representatives. Since this is an election year, this is the last newsletter I am allowed to send you. However, I can respond to anyone who contacts me. If I can ever be of assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Jim McCune • State Representative

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Committees:

- Capital Budget
- Housing
- Rules
- Technology, Energy and Communications
- Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs

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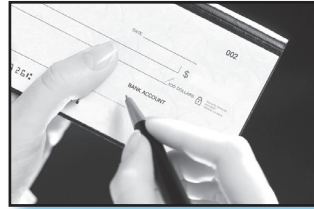
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HOW YOUR TAX DOLLARS ARE BEING SPENT

A responsibility I take seriously as your state representative is deciding how your tax dollars are spent. This year, state lawmakers made mid-course adjustments to our two-year operating, capital and transportation budgets.



Operating budget represents excessive spending

The operating budget is the state's largest budget. It pays for public schools, human services, higher education, prisons, natural resources, and legislative, judicial and government operations.

The supplemental operating budget this year added \$291 million in new state spending. State spending has now increased by over 33 percent – \$8.7 billion – since 2004.

Our state does not have a revenue problem. In fact, our revenue continues to grow at a healthy rate of around 7 percent. However, our state does have a spending problem. Our spending growth rate is around 16 percent. This represents a huge increase in state spending.

The end result is nonpartisan Senate staff is projecting a \$2.4 billion budget shortfall next year. This will likely lead to tax increases, which I will not support. It will also prevent state lawmakers from providing property tax and other relief to families.

If the state cannot control spending, it cannot control taxes. We must rein-in excessive state spending.

Local projects funded in capital budget

The capital budget provides funding for the construction and repair of public buildings and other long-term investments, such as land acquisitions and transfers. It does not require an increase in taxes.

The supplemental capital budget provides nearly \$9.1 million for 14 ongoing projects in our district. Some of these projects include: Ashford Cultural Center and Mountaineering Museum; Bethel Community Center; Eatonville Family Park; Eatonville Community Pool; Orting Bridge for Kids; Rainier Lifelong Learning Center and Spanaway Youth Housing and Drop-in Center.

I am excited about the Eatonville projects. With a lot of hard work and keeping our district amongst the discussions, we were able to secure funding for the Eatonville Community Pool locker room.

Local infrastructure needs to be addressed in transportation budget

The transportation budget pays for projects involving roads, bridges, railways, ferries, and transit systems.

The supplemental transportation budget provides over \$253 million for 28 projects in our district. This includes continued funding for the State Route 704 Cross Base Highway, State Route 510 Yelm Loop, State Route 162 Puyallup River Bridge replacement, and State Route 7 Elbe safety rest area, in addition to \$600,000 for a new signal on State Route 7 at Mountain Highway and 304th, which was badly-needed for this dangerous intersection.

Despite a \$1.8 billion shortfall in the transportation budget, we were able to fight to keep funding in place for 2nd District projects. Not all districts were as fortunate.

State government needs to do a better job keeping its promises – including delivering projects on time and relieving congestion.

NO MEANINGFUL PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

Following the reinstatement of the voters' will, Initiative 747, in a special session in November, the majority party and governor promised property tax relief to homeowners. They failed to deliver.

More must be done to help people with their increasing property taxes – especially seniors and veterans on fixed incomes. The best way to control taxes is to control government spending. But, as I mentioned before, state spending has increased by over 33 percent – \$8.7 billion – since 2004.

Property tax relief measures I supported

I sponsored measures this year that would have provided property tax relief and other protections for families. These three bills were not even allowed a public hearing:

- **House Bill 3353** would have eliminated the state portion of property taxes.
- **House Bill 2419** would have given homeowners who paid property taxes in 2007 a \$400 rebate check.
- **House Bill 2418** would have required voter approval to use banked property tax levy capacity.



STRENGTHENING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Pierce County Skills Center

The supplemental capital budget included \$3.1 million in funding for a new Pierce County Skills Center. This was one of my main priorities this year and I worked hard to ensure that the necessary funding was secured as negotiations took place.

Skills centers are regional, cooperative public schools

that provide comprehensive, industry-defined, technical education for high school students who may participate in Running Start or apprenticeship programs. I am a firm believer that skills centers reduce high school drop-out rates.

Ten Pierce County school districts conducted a study and established the feasibility for building a skills center. The consortium believes both the population growth and diverse employment base in Pierce County will cause greater demand for career and technical education offerings in the county's high schools. I agree.

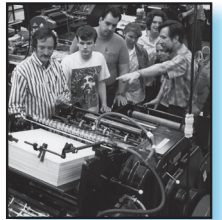


REP. JIM McCUNE SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON THE HOUSE FLOOR.

Career and technical education

I supported a measure that will overhaul career and technical education in our public schools. This is a very important step in ensuring our students have more options as they choose career paths after high school.

Senate Bill 6377 will ensure high school career and technical education programs are connected to apprenticeship and certified programs. More than 175,000 students in our schools rely on these programs.



Strong academic standards, a better testing system

I continue to fight for higher, more successful academic standards. Our students must receive a proper education that prepares them for success in college and the working world.

This means first and foremost that we need to have a more accurate and competent testing system than the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The WASL has been a dismal failure at a high cost to the state and students who are now forced to struggle through remedial classes at college instead of focus on earning a degree that will enable them to get a decent job.

The WASL has also been much more expensive than most other types of achievement tests, and has little to show for these increased costs. The money that is being wasted on this ineffective assessment needs to be redirected to other areas, such as focusing on reducing class sizes and purchasing quality textbooks.

During the 2007 interim, an independent task force researched math and education standards. It rightly concluded we need to get back to the basic and fundamental academic concepts that are needed to succeed in life.

However, our Superintendent of Public Instruction continues to push an agenda and academic standards that have received very poor ratings from national knowledge assessment groups.

I will continue to fight against the bureaucracy in Olympia, and make sure our state offers the best in academics for our children.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Public safety is one of my top priorities. It worries me that the state does not know the whereabouts of over 1,300 of its sex offenders. This is unacceptable.

I believe all Level 3 sex offenders, who are considered the most dangerous, and those who fail to register properly should be monitored with GPS technology. I supported a measure that would have authorized this, **House Bill 2440**, but it died.



Progress was made with one sex offender law this year, in addition to other legislation that addresses identity theft, gangs and those who elude law enforcement. I voted for these measures:

- **House Bill 2713** will set-up a statewide sex offender and felon DNA database.
- **House Bill 2637** will help victims of identity theft recover from their crimes.
- **House Bill 2712** will provide a statewide definition of a gang, gang member and gang crime, as well as create a statewide gang database. It will also provide funding for additional law enforcement resources in fighting gangs.
- **House Bill 1030** will increase sentencing for someone who endangers the public while eluding a police officer.